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Reply to: 3410 June 12, 1991

Subject: Beech and Maple Defoliation

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To: Forest Supervisor, Allegheny National Forest

On Friday, May 31, 1991, Steve Wingate of the Ridgway Ranger District reported an outbreak of "looper type" caterpillars defoliating beech in the highland area of the Ridgway District. Kelly Riddle, Forest Health Protection, visited the area during the week of June 3-7, 1991, and confirmed Steve Wingate's report. Several of the larvae were collected and taken to the Morgantown Field Office for identification. The larvae seemed to be concentrating their feeding on American Beech, but were also seen feeding to a lessor extent on Sugar and Red Maple. The overall extent of the defoliation is not known at this time, but will be evaluated during the aerial sketchmap survey scheduled for June 24-26 and 28, 1991.

The defoliation is being caused primarily by a looper complex which includes the elm spanworm, the linden looper, the green fruitworm, and possibly others. This type of outbreak normally lasts for no more than two years. The extent of damage (tree mortality and growth losses) resulting from these periodic outbreaks is very unpredictable and is for the most part dictated by a number of factors including a wide range of stresses that may occur before, during, or after defoliation, as well as the presence of secondary agents such as Armillaria mellea. Normally, however, impacts are not severe.

Subsequent to the initial report by Steve Wingate, Stan Kobielski, Bradford RD, and Bob White, SO, have also reported similar outbreak conditions on the Bradford and Marienville Ranger Districts. Reports of this type are extremely helpful to Forest Health Protection personnal in making timely assessments of the causal agent(s) and the extent of damage. If anyone has any questions or would like additional information concerning these or other pest problems, please contact Kelly via the DO at S24L08A, or by phone at (304) 291-4133.

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Forest Health Protection

cc: Bradford RD
Ridgway RD
Marienville RD
Sheffield RD
Bob White, SO
Susan Stout, Warren Lab

KSR/gjh